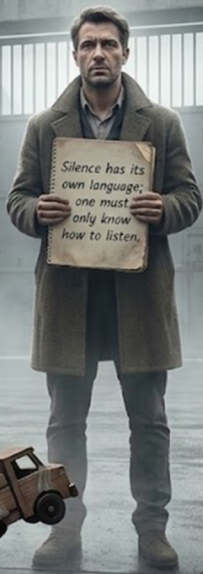


# THE TEACHER OF SILENCE

A world consisting of a single sentence



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Novella

## PROLOG – “A Sentence as an Offense”

As the evening cool settled over the narrow streets of Amed, Baran Rojhilat sat at his desk. For years he had taught his students the same principle again and again: *“Thinking is not a crime.”*

That night he was writing a short piece for the school bulletin. He had no political intention; he attacked no one, elevated no one, accused no one. He simply wrote down the belief carried by a teacher, a father, a human being.

In the middle of the text he paused, the pen hovering in the air. Then he wrote the sentence that had appeared in his mind like a small door opening toward hope:

**“Every people should be free to express their identity.”**

For Baran, this sentence was the essence of the world he wanted to leave to his children: a world in which Nûdem would not be afraid to speak her language at school; a world in which Rêber could grow up without hiding who he was.

But Baran did not know that this sentence would split his life in two.

The next day the text appeared on the school’s website — and within hours it was reported. What Baran had defended was interpreted by certain authorities as “dividing the nation.” Yet Baran had never thought of division; on the contrary, he had thought of understanding. The sentence was as simple as a teacher’s heart, as pure as a father’s prayer.

But the language of laws is sometimes harsher than the language of people. In the same legal code, the articles on freedom of thought stood side by side with the articles on “separatism.” Baran did not yet know on which side he had landed.

When he came home that evening, Zilan poured him tea, and the children crowded around him. There was a trace of tiredness on his face, but inside him there was calm. He believed he had done the right thing as a teacher.

Before he fell asleep that night, he read the sentence once more. Softly he whispered:

**“One sentence... just a single sentence.”**

And he did not yet sense that this sentence was already walking toward the night when his door would be kicked in.

## **1 – The Door at Midnight**

It was a quiet night in Amed. The pale glow of the streetlamps cast trembling shadows across the walls of Baran’s house. Zilan had put the children to bed, and Baran was reviewing his lesson plan for the next day. The house carried all the peace of an ordinary night.

**02:17 a.m.**

At first, there were only muffled voices behind the door. Then came the hard, metallic clatter of a battering tool.

Zilan jolted awake. Baran was already moving toward the door when the noise swelled — like a scream, like a command, like wood being torn apart.

The door shattered with a single blow.

Uniformed men flooded into the house, like a cold gust sweeping through the hallway. A cry rose from the children's room: Nûdem's thin voice, Rêber's panicked, tear-choked wailing.

Baran's vision blurred for a moment. While he was still trying to understand what was happening, a police officer grabbed his arm roughly.

Zilan collapsed beside the broken door, her hands trembling. "What's happening?" she whispered — barely audible, almost like a breath.

One of the officers spoke without a trace of emotion, as if reciting a paragraph from a statute:

**"Baran Rojhilat, you are under arrest."**

Baran's first thought was of the children. Nûdem stood in the doorway, eyes wide, breath shaking. Rêber clung to his mother's skirt, his sobs heavier than a small heart could bear.

Baran tried to go to them, but they did not let him. As his arms were forced behind his back, the warmth drained from the house. Even the walls seemed suddenly cold.

Zilan reached out her hand. Her fingers brushed his arm for only a fleeting second. In that moment, the light of an entire home went out.

As Baran was led outside, the blue lights of the police vehicles cast harsh shadows across his face. The silence of the night had been broken — by the tears of his children.

The door closed behind him. The last thing he heard was Nûdem's trembling voice:

**“Papa... don't go...”**

And from that night on, Baran would not cross the threshold of his home again — not for six long months.

## **2 – Zilan's Silence**

Since the night Baran had been taken away, the house carried for a long time the cold the officers had left behind. The broken doorframe still stood in the hallway. Zilan stared at it until dawn, as if the door might open again and Baran might step inside. But when morning came, the door was still shattered, and the house still silent.

When the children woke, the first question came from Nûdem:  
**“Mama, where is Papa?”**

Zilan could not answer. She only stroked her daughter's hair and lowered her gaze. Rêber clung to her leg and hid his face. Even the children's breathing could not break the silence in the house.

That day, Zilan called a repairman to fix the door. The man looked at the splinters and the bent frame, shaking his head. **“There was a night raid here,”** he muttered. Zilan said nothing. The man felt the weight of her silence and did not ask further. He repaired the door, took his payment, and left.

The house was closed again, yet it no longer felt safe. Zilan sensed it with every step she took.

The first week without Baran felt like an empty room. In every corner lay a trace of him: a pen on the desk, a note tucked between books, a toy fallen to the floor in the children’s room. Zilan feared touching these traces — as if touching them would deepen the pain of his absence.

In the first days, neighbors knocked on the door and said *“Get well soon.”* But their voices were barely audible, like secret whispers. No one spoke long. No one wanted to come inside. No one could hold Zilan’s gaze.

After a week, the visits stopped. On the street, people lowered their heads and hurried past. Zilan had expected it. Fear was the feeling that spread fastest.

With Baran gone, Zilan’s worry about the family’s livelihood grew immeasurably. Two children, rent, food — and Baran’s salary had been cut. When she asked at the office, the clerk said only one sentence:

**“During pre-trial detention, salary payments are suspended.”**

His face showed no emotion. As if he were speaking about a file number, not a human being.

On her way home, the streets of Amed seemed narrower and darker than usual. The children were waiting for her. Nûdem ran to her as soon as the door opened. Rêber searched her bag, as if he might find a message from his father inside.

Zilan could not lie to them. **“Your father will come back,”** she said. When, how, in what condition — she did not know.

After some time, Zilan began looking for work. She could read and write, but had no formal training. In Amed, finding work was difficult — especially once word had spread that Baran had been arrested.

The first place was a textile workshop. The owner read her form, and his expression changed. **“Your husband’s situation... is complicated,”** he said. Zilan lowered her head. **“For us, that would be a problem. I’m sorry.”**

Zilan thanked him and left. On the street she felt the eyes of the people. As if everyone knew what had happened — and carried that knowledge silently.

Her second attempt was a cleaning company. There, no one asked questions. **“Can you work?” “Yes.”** She was hired.

The work was hard. She left the house early and returned before the children fell asleep. Her hands constantly smelled of cleaning agents. Sometimes her knees trembled when she climbed stairs. But she worked. She had to.

The silence in the house grew even larger with Baran’s absence. In the evenings, after the children slept, Zilan sat at the kitchen table and thought. She knew Baran was in custody — but not where, not how, not in what condition. Every day

she waited for news. Every day she hoped the phone would ring. Every day she imagined the door opening.

But nothing happened.

One evening, after the children had fallen asleep, Zilan suddenly began to cry. Quietly, so no one would hear. Her tears fell onto the table. In that moment, the silence of the house struck her like a wall.

Baran's absence was not a void — it was a weight. And Zilan carried that weight every day.

One day a neighbor came by and brought a plate of food. After setting it down, she remained silent for a moment. Then she said softly:

**“Zilan... no one talks about it, but everyone knows. Be strong. For the children.”**

Zilan nodded. Before the woman left, she added: **“Baran was a good man. I hope he comes back soon.”**

Zilan felt her eyes fill. The woman took her hand, then left.

That day, for the first time, Zilan did not feel completely alone. But the feeling did not last. The next day brought silence again. The children's questions again. The uncertainty again.

Zilan's silence was heavier than Baran's absence. Because Baran's absence was an event — Zilan's silence was a condition.

Every day she withdrew a little more, became a little weaker, a little lonelier. Yet in front of the children she had to remain strong. When brushing Nûdem's hair, when helping Rêber with his jacket, when turning on the lights in the house — she always had to show strength.

But when night came, the lights went out, and the children slept... Zilan's silence filled the entire house.

And that silence hurt more than Baran's absence.

### **3 – Nûdem's Question**

The days after Baran's arrest felt to Zilan like a long, endless corridor. Every morning she woke to the same silence, began the day with the same uncertainty, and ended the night with the same exhaustion. But for the children, time passed differently. For them, each day carried a new question, a new expectation, a new spark of hope.

At first, Nûdem did not understand her father's absence. The nighttime police raid had felt like a bad dream, and in the morning she believed everything would return to normal. But the next morning she did not hear her father's voice. Nor on the third. A week later she knew something was wrong.

That morning, while Zilan prepared breakfast, Nûdem sat down on a chair and looked at her mother. Her gaze was far too heavy for a seven-year-old child.

**“Mama... why isn't Papa coming back?”**

Zilan set down the teaspoon and turned to her. She had expected this question. Every day. But answering it grew harder with each passing day.

**“Papa... has work,”** she said slowly, so her voice wouldn’t tremble. **“He has to stay away for a while.”**

Nûdem frowned. **“Is he at school?”**

Zilan shook her head. **“No, my love... somewhere else.”**

**“When will he come back?”**

Zilan could not answer. She avoided her daughter’s eyes, stroked her hair. **“Soon,”** she said. But the word echoed through the room and fell into emptiness.

As Nûdem tried to understand her father’s absence, she created her own ways of coping. Sometimes she sat by the door, imagining she could hear his footsteps. Sometimes she crouched by the window, watching every man who passed by, searching each face for her father’s. Sometimes she sat in Baran’s chair, opened a notebook, took a pen, and pretended to write like he did.

One evening, while Zilan washed dishes in the kitchen, Nûdem approached quietly. In her hand she held Baran’s old notebook. The cover was worn, the corners bent.

**“Mama,”** she said, **“Papa always had this notebook with him.”**

Zilan looked at it. It was Baran's small notebook, the one he had used for years. Lesson plans, student names, little memories — all inside. Her heart tightened.

**"Yes," she said. "He liked it very much."**

Nûdem opened it. On one page stood a sentence in Baran's handwriting: **"Children are the purest page of the future."**

Nûdem traced the line with her finger. **"Mama... did Papa write me in here too?"**

Zilan swallowed. **"Papa loves you very much,"** she said. **"Always."**

Nûdem nodded, but her eyes stayed fixed on the notebook — as if she were searching for a clue about where her father was.

A few days later, Nûdem's teacher spoke to Zilan outside the school. Her face was concerned.

**"Mrs. Zilan,"** she said, **"Nûdem was very withdrawn today. She didn't answer, and she looked as if she might cry."**

Zilan lowered her head. **"We're having difficult days at home."**

The teacher nodded with understanding. **"Children feel such things deeply. We'll keep an eye on her."**

Zilan thanked her. Nûdem held her hand as they walked home. She was quiet. In her eyes lay a tiredness that did not belong to a child.

At home, Nûdem took off her shoes and went to her room. When Zilan followed, she found her sitting on the edge of the bed, eyes damp.

**“Mama,”** she said, **“why doesn’t Papa pick me up?”**

This question was heavier than all the others. It was not just curiosity — it was hurt. A small heart trying to understand a great absence.

Zilan sat beside her and held her close. **“Papa loves you very much,”** she said. **“He wants to come. But he can’t.”**

**“Why?”**

This time Zilan could not answer. She only held her daughter tighter. Nûdem rested her head on her shoulder and cried softly.

From that night on, Nûdem’s questions came more often. Every morning, every evening, sometimes several times a day:

**“Mama, why isn’t Papa coming?” “Mama, where is Papa?” “Mama, does Papa miss me?” “Mama, why is Papa leaving us alone?”**

Zilan tried to answer each time, but the words grew fewer. How do you explain the truth to a child? How do you say something a child’s heart cannot carry?

She didn’t know. She only stroked Nûdem’s hair, held her close, and said: **“Papa loves you very much.”**

But in Nûdem's eyes, the same question always remained:  
**"Then why isn't he coming?"**

One evening, Nûdem sat in Baran's chair, the notebook open, writing something inside. When Zilan came closer, she saw the sentence:

**"Papa, I'm waiting for you."**

Below it, a small drawing: a house, a door, and a little girl standing in front of it.

Zilan felt her eyes burn. Nûdem looked up at her.

**"Mama,"** she said, **"when Papa comes, I'll give this to him."**

Zilan sat beside her and held her. **"Yes,"** she said. **"Papa will love it."**

But inside, she knew something else: she did not know when Baran would see that picture.

Nûdem's question wandered through the house like a shadow. In every room, in every corner, in every silence it echoed:

**"Why isn't Papa coming?"**

## **4 – Rêber's Toy**

The quietest change in the house after Baran's disappearance showed itself in Rêber. The world of a four-year-old child is made less of words and more of things. And so, to understand his father's absence, Rêber did not search for sentences — he searched for his toys.

Baran had given him a wooden truck. He had painted it himself for Rêber's birthday: the wheels black, the loading bed blue, a small yellow star on the front. Rêber took the truck everywhere — to bed, to the table, outside, even to the bathroom door.

Since the night Baran had been taken away, Rêber had not let go of the truck. As if the toy could fill some part of the emptiness his father had left behind.

One morning, while Zilan was getting the children ready for school, the truck fell to the floor. It hit hard, and one of the front wheels broke off. Rêber froze. Then he picked up the truck and stared at the broken wheel.

His eyes filled with tears. But he did not cry. He held the truck tightly in both hands and walked to his mother.

**“Mama,”** he said in a thin, trembling voice, **“Papa will fix it.”**

Zilan looked at the broken toy. The wheel had snapped off, a small piece of wood splintered. Her heart tightened, but she did not show it.

**“When Papa comes, he’ll take a look at it,”** she said softly.

Rêber nodded, took the truck, and went to his room. Zilan watched him go and felt a lump in her throat. Even a broken toy wheel reminded her of the gap in the house.

At kindergarten, the teacher noticed Rêber's silence. While the other children played, he sat in a corner and stared at his truck. The teacher knelt beside him.

**“Rêber, why aren’t you playing?”**

Without looking up, he answered: **“The truck is broken.”**

The teacher smiled. **“We can fix it at home.”**

Rêber shook his head. **“No. Papa will fix it.”**

The teacher paused. Then she asked quietly: **“Where is your Papa?”**

Rêber pressed the truck tighter against his chest. His eyes filled again, but still he did not cry. He only whispered:

**“Papa is gone.”**

The teacher stroked his head. But she did not know what to say. Some answers are too heavy for a child’s heart.

That evening, Rêber placed the truck on the table. Zilan noticed his unusual silence. Normally he ran around the kitchen, asked questions, showed his toys. But tonight he said nothing.

When Zilan sat down, he pushed the truck toward her.

**“Mama,”** he asked, **“when is Papa coming?”**

Zilan took a deep breath. She was used to this question from Nûdem, but from Rêber it struck her harder. His question was not a thought — it was a need. The simple, pure, fragile need of a child for his father.

**“Soon,”** she said. But the word fell again into emptiness.

Rêber took the truck and tried to press the wheel back on. But the pieces no longer fit. Finally he asked for tape.

Zilan fetched some from the drawer. Rêber taped the wheel back on. The tape stuck crookedly, the wheel no longer turned, the truck was misshapen. But Rêber still smiled.

**“Papa will fix it properly when he comes.”**

Zilan looked away. Every hopeful word from her son hurt her a little more.

Later, when the children were asleep, Zilan checked on them. Rêber was still sitting on the edge of his bed. The truck lay on his knees. The wheel was taped on, the loading bed slightly warped.

Zilan sat beside him. **“My love, you’re not sleeping yet?”**

Rêber looked up. **“I’m waiting for the truck.”**

**“Why?”**

**“Papa will make it whole again.”**

Zilan felt her eyes burn, but she held herself together. She picked up the truck. The crookedly taped wheel would never work properly again.

**“Rêber,”** she said softly, **“Papa loves you very much.”**

Rêber nodded. **“I love him too.”**

Then he suddenly asked:

**“Mama... why doesn’t Papa pick me up?”**

The question struck Zilan like a blade. Rêber’s voice was fragile, wounded — a small heart trying to understand a great absence.

Zilan held him close. **“Papa didn’t leave you,”** she said. **“He wants to come. But he can’t.”**

**“Why?”**

Zilan could not answer. She only held him tighter. Rêber rested his head on her shoulder — and held the truck pressed against his chest.

From that night on, he never let go of the truck again. Sometimes he replaced the tape, sometimes he tried to fix the wheel again, sometimes he placed the truck beside his bed and waited for the moment his father would walk through the door.

Every morning he checked the truck first. Every night he fell asleep with it. As if the toy were a shield against his father’s absence.

Zilan watched him — and could do nothing. A wooden truck could not replace a father. But for Rêber, the truck was a piece of him.

And that piece was broken. Like the silence in the house. Like the heaviness in Zilan’s heart. Like Baran’s absence.

Rêber’s toy was the smallest thing in the house — and yet it carried the greatest pain. The broken wheel, the tape, the

crooked lines: all of it was the quiet story of a child waiting for his father.

And every time Zilan saw the truck, she thought the same thought:

**“If only Baran could see this.”**

## **5 – The Prosecutor**

During the six months Baran was held in pre-trial detention, he lost all sense of how time passed. The days blurred into one another, the nights began with the same darkness and ended with the same silence. The walls of his cell were like a mirror reflecting his thoughts back at him; whenever he tried to speak, the words remained stuck in his throat.

At the end of the six months, one morning the door opened. An officer called his name. **“Transfer to the prosecutor’s office.”**

Baran stood up. They put handcuffs on him. As he walked down the corridor, his footsteps echoed. Each step brought him closer to the heaviest conversation of his life.

The prosecutor’s building looked from the outside like an ordinary government office. But for Baran, it was the place where his fate would be decided. An officer led him into a room. The room was large, the walls white, files spread across the desk.

The prosecutor sat behind the desk — a middle-aged man with a hard face and sharp eyes. When Baran entered, he lifted his head and examined him.

**“Baran Rojhilat,”** he said in a cold voice. **“We are here to discuss the text you wrote.”**

Baran sat down. The handcuffs remained on his wrists. The prosecutor opened the file and pulled out a sheet of paper.

**“Did you write this sentence?”** He read aloud: **“Every people should be free to express their identity.”**

Baran nodded. **“Yes. I wrote that.”**

The prosecutor closed the file with a snap. **“This sentence constitutes an attempt to divide the nation.”**

Baran’s heart faltered. **“I merely defended freedom of thought,”** he said calmly but firmly. **“I did not intend to divide anyone. I did not attack anyone.”**

The prosecutor leaned back. **“In this country, everyone is a Turk,”** he said, as if reciting a legal statute. **“Speaking of other identities serves separatism.”**

Baran’s eyes filled, but he held himself together. **“I am a teacher,”** he said. **“I wished for a world where children can live without hiding who they are.”**

The prosecutor shook his head. **“Your dreams do not stand above the law.”**

He opened the file again and read Baran’s text line by line. For each line he gave a comment. Each comment shattered Baran’s hope a little more.

**“Here you say ‘identity.’ That is separatist language.”  
“Here you say ‘express freely.’ That means questioning  
state authority.” “Here you say ‘every people.’ That rejects  
the single national identity.”**

Baran heard every word. But none of it reflected the meaning of his sentence.

**“I did not reject anyone,” he said. “I only argued that  
people should be allowed to express themselves.”**

The prosecutor closed the file. **“There is freedom of  
expression in this country,”** he said. **“But statements that  
endanger the unity of the state are punishable.”**

Baran was silent for a moment. Then he asked quietly:  
**“Whom did I threaten?”**

The prosecutor did not answer. He set the file aside. **“You will  
present your defense in court.”**

As Baran left the room, the prosecutor’s last sentence echoed in his mind:

**“In this country, everyone is a Turk.”**

That sentence was like a wall erasing his own identity. Behind that wall lay his language, his culture, his history. But for the prosecutor, they had no value.

In the corridor, tears rose in Baran’s eyes. But he did not cry. Crying would not lighten the burden he carried.

The officer brought him back to his cell. When the door closed, Baran took a deep breath. The prosecutor's words echoed against the walls:

**“In this country, everyone is a Turk.”**

Baran closed his eyes and whispered: **“Then who am I?”**

The question echoed in the darkness like the lost voice of a child.

The short conversation in the prosecutor's office had sealed Baran's fate. Now he knew: his sentence was not a thought — it was an offense.

And Baran still did not understand what that offense was supposed to be.

## **6 – The Judge**

After the interrogation at the prosecutor's office, Baran remained in pre-trial detention for several more weeks. Each day followed the same routine: morning count, lunch, evening silence. Yet throughout those weeks, his thoughts circled around only one thing: the day of the trial.

One morning the door opened and an officer called his name. **“You're being taken to court.”**

Baran stood up. They put handcuffs on him. As he walked down the corridor, even the coldness of the walls felt heavier than usual. Each step brought him closer to the place where his identity would be put on trial.

The courthouse was full of people. In the hallways, whispers drifted, files were carried, lawyers hurried past with quick steps. An officer led Baran into a windowless room. He waited.

Then the door opened. **“The hearing is starting.”**

When Baran entered the courtroom, he felt dizzy for a moment. The room was large, the walls high, the light harsh. The judge sat on the podium; his face expressionless. Not like a person, but like a mechanism that delivers decisions.

The prosecutor was there as well. Baran’s text lay before him, the file open.

Baran’s gaze moved to the seats for the audience. Zilan was not there. The children were not there. No one. The trial began with Baran’s loneliness.

The judge opened the file and read his name. **“Baran Rojhilat. Teacher.”**

Baran lifted his head. **“I am here.”**

The judge adjusted his glasses. **“You will respond to the text you wrote.”**

The prosecutor stood. **“The defendant used formulations that threaten the unity of the nation. By emphasizing identity, he encouraged separatist tendencies.”**

Baran listened but said nothing. The judge turned to him.

**“Defendant, do you wish to defend yourself?”**

Baran took a deep breath. **“I am a teacher,”** he said. **“The sentence I wrote was meant to allow children to express themselves freely. I did not intend to divide anyone.”**

The judge’s face remained unmoved. **“In this country there is only one identity,”** he said. **“Speaking of other identities serves division.”**

Baran’s chest tightened. **“I only argued that people should be allowed to express themselves,”** he said. **“That should not be a crime.”**

The judge closed the file. **“The law says otherwise.”**

The longer the hearing lasted, the more invisible Baran’s words became. The prosecutor interpreted every line of his text as an offense, and the judge confirmed each interpretation. Baran’s voice dissolved in the room.

At one moment, Baran spoke a sentence in his own language — an impulse, an attempt to explain himself.

The judge frowned. **“What did you say?”**

Baran repeated the sentence.

The judge shook his head. **“I do not understand you. In this court, Turkish is spoken.”**

Baran felt something break inside him. Even his language was a suspicion here. As if his identity were a forbidden object in the room.

The prosecutor stood again. **“Even the language the defendant uses shows separatist intent.”**

The judge nodded. **“It will be recorded.”**

In that moment, Baran understood: this court was a theater. The ending had been decided long before. His defense was only decoration.

At the end of the hearing, the judge closed the file. **“The verdict will be announced later.”**

An officer approached Baran and put the handcuffs back on. As Baran left the courtroom, he looked back one last time. The judge still sat motionless on his podium; his face showed no trace of humanity.

In the corridor, Baran thought only one sentence: **“What have I done?”**

But that question interested no one in this building.

Back in his cell, Baran sat on the bed. The judge’s face would not leave him. A face that decided the fate of a human being without feeling its weight.

Baran whispered: **“I wrote only one sentence.”**

But in the courtroom, that sentence had been read as a crime.

And now Baran knew how the verdict would turn out. Because in that courtroom, there was no justice. Only procedure.

## 7 – The Verdict

On the day the verdict was to be announced, the weight in Baran's chest was heavier than during all six months of his detention. When the cell door opened that morning, the officer's face showed no expression. **"To the courtroom."** He said nothing more.

Baran stood up. The handcuffs clicked shut. As he walked down the corridor, his footsteps echoed like blows. Each step brought him closer to the sharpest line of his life — a line that would decide the fate of a teacher who had written only a single sentence.

The courtroom was full again. The prosecutor had taken his seat, the file open before him. The judge sat on the podium; his face was once more cold, expressionless, untouched. When Baran entered, his gaze drifted to the audience seats.

This time, Zilan was there.

Her face was pale, her eyes red from sleepless nights. Beside her sat Nûdem and Rêber. The children clung to her hands. When Baran saw them, his breath caught. His heart beat faster. But he could not go to them — the handcuffs and the officer prevented it.

Zilan looked at him, and her eyes filled. But she did not cry. The children were with her. She had to remain strong.

The judge opened the file. The room fell silent. It was as if everyone held their breath.

**“Defendant Baran Rohilat,”** the judge said in a hard voice. **“The text you wrote and the formulations you used are considered statements that threaten the unity of the nation.”**

The prosecutor stood. **“By emphasizing identity, the defendant encouraged separatist tendencies.”**

Baran lifted his head. **“I encouraged no one,”** he said. **“I only argued that people should be allowed to express themselves.”**

The judge raised his hand. **“Your defense is recorded.”**

But his face revealed that Baran’s words carried no weight.

The judge closed the file. A murmur went through the room. Zilan’s hand trembled. Nûdem clung tighter to her. Rêber looked at his father — fear in his eyes.

The judge picked up the verdict. His voice grew heavier, slower.

**“The defendant, Baran Rohilat, is hereby sentenced, due to the text he wrote and the formulations he used...”** He paused. The entire room froze. **“... to five years in prison.”**

Zilan collapsed. For a moment her breath seemed to stop, then her vision went dark and she sank to the floor.

Nûdem screamed. **“Mama!”** Her voice echoed through the courtroom — the sound of a child’s heart breaking in a single instant.

Rêber began to cry. **“Papa!”** His small hands trembled in the air, as if trying to reach his father.

The officer pulled Baran back. Baran tried to go to his children, tried to go to Zilan, but they did not let him. The handcuffs tightened. The officer led him toward the door.

Baran’s gaze remained fixed on Zilan, lying motionless on the floor. **“Zilan!”** he called. But his voice dissolved in the room.

The judge left the podium. The prosecutor gathered his files. People in the courtroom began whispering. But Baran’s world had shattered completely in that moment.

As the officer led him down the corridor, Baran’s legs trembled. The handcuffs felt light — because the weight inside him was heavier.

**“Five years...”** he whispered. **“I wrote only one sentence.”**

The cold walls of the corridor threw the sentence back at him. As if even they were witnesses to his fate.

In the courtroom, an officer tended to the unconscious Zilan. The children cried beside her. No one explained anything to them. No one comforted them.

Nûdem reached her hand toward the glass barrier as Baran was led out — but she could not touch him. Rêber held his broken truck tightly against his chest, as if the toy could protect him.

As Baran was led down the corridor, he still heard the voices of his children. Voices that tear a father’s heart into pieces.

Back in the cell, he sat on the bed. The handcuffs were removed, but the marks remained on his wrists. He closed his eyes.

Five years.

Five years without his children. Five years in which Zilan would be alone. Five years to pay the price of a single sentence.

Baran leaned his head against the wall and took a deep breath.

**“I wrote only one sentence,”** he said. But he now knew: that sentence had split his life in two.

And the court had sealed that break.

## 8 – The Prison Gate

On the day Baran was led out of the courtroom, the sky was overcast. A gray veil hung over the city, as if it had settled heavily onto the streets of Amed. As the officer placed him in the police van, Baran had only one image before his eyes: Zilan collapsing unconscious; the screams of the children; Nûdem’s trembling voice; Rêber clutching his hastily taped-together truck.

When the van door slammed shut, everything inside Baran went dark.

The prison lay outside the city, behind high walls rising like cold concrete against the sky. When the van door opened, Baran stepped out. The sky was still gray. The wind cut sharply.

The officer led him to the entrance. The gate was a massive iron slab, stained with rust and scratched by years of use. The closer Baran came to the gate, the heavier the weight in his chest grew.

The prison gate was a line that split a person's life in two. On one side, his family. On the other, uncertainty.

Baran was about to cross that line.

Inside, the officer brought him to registration. A clerk opened the file and read his name.

**“Baran Rojhilat. Five years.”**

The voice sounded as if he were reading a number, not a human fate.

Baran signed. The handcuffs were removed. But the marks remained on his wrists.

The officer led him down a long, cold corridor. The walls were colorless — only gray and white. Each step echoed.

Baran could hear even his own breathing. As if the prison swallowed the voices of the people inside.

At the end of the corridor was another door. The officer opened it. **“Inside.”**

When Baran stepped in, the door fell shut behind him. The sound was like a seal placed over a human life.

Baran stood still. Closed his eyes. Breathed deeply.

The metallic sound of the door still rang in his ears. It mixed with the screams of his children in the courtroom — and burrowed deep inside him.

Before they brought him to his cell, he had to wait in a small room. The room was bare, the walls naked. In the corner stood an old chair. Baran sat down.

The silence of the prison hit him like a wall. This silence was different from the silence of pre-trial detention. There, hope had existed — perhaps he would be released, perhaps return home, perhaps see his children.

But now... the verdict had been spoken. Five years.

Five years behind these walls. Five years in which his children would grow without him seeing it. Five years in which Zilan would fight alone. Five years in which he would learn about his life outside only through letters.

Baran lowered his head. Placed his hands on his knees. Sat motionless for a while.

The officer opened the door. **“Your cell is ready.”**

Baran stood up. As he walked down the corridor, the cold of the walls struck his face. Each step carried him farther away from his family.

At the cell door, the officer stopped and opened it. **“Inside.”**

Baran stepped in. The cell was barely more than a small room: a bed, a blanket, a sink, a toilet. The walls were bare. The window tiny — only a sliver of sky visible.

The officer closed the door. The sound was the same as before: hard, sharp, final.

Baran sat on the bed. Placed his hands on his knees. Looked at the ceiling.

The ceiling was white. But in Baran's eyes it flickered like the faces of his children.

From the corridor came a voice. An officer calling another inmate. Baran heard that voice — and thought of the voices of his children.

Nûdem's scream in the courtroom. Rêber's cry: **"Papa!"** Zilan collapsing.

Baran closed his eyes. Breathed deeply. Even his breath felt heavy.

The last thing he had heard before the prison gate closed behind him were the voices of his children. Those voices now echoed inside his cell.

Baran whispered: **"I wrote only one sentence."**

But that sentence was now nothing more than an echo between the walls.

On the first night, Baran could not sleep. The hardness of the bed, the cold of the walls, the metallic sound of the door — all of it deepened the emptiness inside him.

Through the tiny window he saw a piece of sky. A small fragment. That fragment reminded him of his children's eyes.

Nûdem's question: **"Papa, why aren't you coming?"** Rêber's words: **"Papa will fix it."** Zilan's silence.

Baran closed his eyes. A tear slid down his cheek.

The prison gate had closed. And Baran would live behind that gate for five years.

## **9 – Baran's Inner Monologue**

The first weeks in prison were for Baran like a single, continuous shadow. The days followed the same routine, the nights began with the same silence and ended with the same heaviness. The walls of his cell were like a mirror reflecting his thoughts back at him; no matter how much he wanted to escape them, he could not.

Every morning, his first thoughts were of his children. Nûdem's scream in the courtroom, Rêber clutching his taped-together truck, Zilan collapsing to the floor... These images played in his mind like a film that replayed itself endlessly.

One morning, as the pale light fell through the small window, Baran began to speak softly. No one heard him, but these words were the only thing carrying the weight inside him.

**"I wrote only one sentence,"** he whispered. **"How can a single sentence destroy a person's life?"**

The cell was silent. His voice struck the walls and returned to him.

**“Every people should be free to express their identity.”** He remembered the evening he had written that sentence. He had sat at his desk thinking of his children’s future. Of a world where Nûdem would not be afraid to speak her language. Of a life where Rêber would not have to hide who he was.

**“I didn’t write that sentence to commit a crime,”** he said.  
**“I wrote it to give hope.”**

But in the courtroom, hope had been read as guilt.

Baran lay down on the bed. The ceiling was white, yet in his eyes it looked gray. A small crack ran along one corner; as he stared at it, he thought of the cracks in his own life.

**“I am a teacher,”** he said. **“My only tool was a pen. How can a sentence written with that pen be a threat?”**

He heard the prosecutor’s words again: **“In this country, everyone is a Turk.”**

The judge’s expressionless face stood before his inner eye like a wall. Behind that wall lay Baran’s language, his culture, his history. But the court had forbidden him to cross that wall.

**“Then who am I?”** he whispered. **“What is my language? My past? Who are my children?”**

He carried the answers within him — but outside, they were not allowed. Outside, his identity was a suspicion.

He closed his eyes. Zilan’s face appeared before him. That face had carried the same patience, the same love for years. But in the courtroom, it had fallen to the ground.

**“Zilan... I left you alone,” he said softly. “I never wanted that. Never.”**

Then he saw the faces of his children. Nûdem’s eyes trying to understand what a child cannot understand. Rêber’s small hands holding a broken truck.

**“I am their father,” Baran said. “I lived to protect them. And now... I cannot protect them.”**

That thought cut deep. The helplessness of a father is one of the heaviest burdens.

The silence of the cell made his inner monologue even heavier. Every syllable bounced back and filled the room with emptiness.

**“I am not a criminal,” he said. “I wrote only one sentence.”**

But that sentence had closed the prison gate behind him. That sentence had brought tears to his children’s eyes. That sentence had made Zilan collapse.

Baran was silent for a moment. Then he whispered:

**“Some sentences do not make you guilty... but some sentences make you alone.”**

The sentence echoed through the cell. The weight inside him grew.

After a while, Baran stood up. He sat in the corner of the cell, pulled his knees to his chest, and rested his head on them.

**“Five years...” he said. “Five years my children will grow. And I will not be with them.”**

That thought tore him apart. A father’s greatest fear is not losing his children — but being forgotten by them.

**“Will Nûdem forget me?” “Will Rêber remember me?”  
“Will Zilan be able to carry this burden alone?”**

These questions were the heaviest part of his monologue.

The cell door was closed. No sound came from outside. Baran continued speaking, only for himself.

**“I am a teacher. I lived to teach children the truth. And now... I cannot even tell my own children the truth.”**

A tear slid down his cheek. He did not wipe it away. It was part of the weight.

**“I wrote only one sentence,” he said finally. “And that sentence brought me here.”**

The cell remained silent. Baran’s inner monologue dissolved into that silence.

But Baran knew: This monologue was the only voice he had left.

## **10 – Zilan’s Struggle**

Since Baran had been sent to prison, Amed had turned into an entirely different city for Zilan. The paths where she once walked with the children, the streets leading to the market, the

doorways where she used to chat with neighbors — all of it had suddenly become unfamiliar. As if the city itself had sensed Baran's absence and changed because of it.

After the day of the verdict, Zilan needed several days to recover. The silence in the house was heavier than Baran's absence itself. The children looked at her, searching her eyes for an answer. But in Zilan's eyes there was only exhaustion.

One morning, while Nûdem was getting ready for school, Zilan sat in the kitchen staring into her cold tea. She had forgotten to drink it.

Nûdem stepped toward her. **“Mama, we’re going to be late today.”**

Zilan lifted her head. Her daughter's face was like a small mirror of Baran's. She took a deep breath.

**“Alright, my love,”** she said. **“I’ll get ready.”**

But even that felt difficult.

With Baran's conviction, Zilan's worry about their livelihood had grown even larger. The salary that had been cut during pre-trial detention was now gone for good. Two children, rent, food — and no job.

She had to return to her work at the cleaning company. The job was hard, but she had no choice. She left the house early, returned before the children fell asleep. Her hands constantly smelled of cleaning agents. Sometimes her knees trembled when she climbed stairs. But she kept working.

One day, the owner of the house she cleaned called out to her.  
**“Could you also do the windows?”**

Zilan nodded. **“Of course.”**

The woman watched her for a moment. Then she asked: **“Your husband? I used to see you often with the children.”**

Zilan paused. She didn’t know how to answer. Finally she said only:

**“He is far away.”**

The woman asked no further. But she had seen the exhaustion in Zilan’s face.

When Zilan came home that evening, the children ran to her. Nûdem hugged her. Rêber held up his truck.

**“Mama, I tried to fix it again today.”**

Zilan smiled. **“It looks good.”**

But the wheel was still taped on. Rêber’s hope was still unbroken.

Zilan sat the children down for dinner. She herself remained standing in the kitchen for a moment. The tiredness sat deep in her bones. But in front of the children she had to be strong.

After dinner, Nûdem did her homework. Rêber played with his toys. Zilan watched them — and one thought passed through her:

**“If Baran were here... everything would be different.”**

That thought hurt.

One evening, after the children had fallen asleep, Zilan sat at the kitchen table. There lay a letter. From the prison.

Baran’s handwriting.

Her hands trembled as she opened it. Every line was like a breath from him.

**“Zilan, I am alright. Don’t worry. Take care of the children. I am here, but my heart is with you.”**

As she read, tears ran down her cheeks. She cried quietly so the children wouldn’t hear.

At the end of the letter stood a sentence:

**“Stay strong. I will come back.”**

Zilan folded the letter and pressed it to her heart. But that sentence was both hope and pain.

The next day she brought the children to school. The teacher spoke to her.

**“Nûdem was very withdrawn today,” she said. “Is something wrong at home?”**

Zilan lowered her head. **“We’re having difficult days.”**

The teacher nodded. **“We’ll take care of her.”**

Zilan thanked her. But as she left the school grounds, her eyes filled with tears. She didn't want her children to carry this burden.

One evening, the neighbor knocked on the door. She brought a plate of food.

**"I cooked too much," she said. "Give it to the children."**

Zilan thanked her. The woman did not come in. But before she left, she said:

**"You are strong. These days will pass."**

Zilan closed the door. For a moment she felt strength. But then the silence returned.

Zilan's struggle grew every day with Baran's absence. Waking up early, getting the children ready, going to work, returning in the evening, cooking, homework, housework... And when night came and everyone slept, Zilan sat alone in the kitchen.

This silence was heavier than Baran's absence.

But Zilan did not give up. Because she had children. Because Baran had written to her:

**"Stay strong."**

Every night she thought of that sentence. And every morning she stood up again.

## 11 – Nûdem's Letter

The months after Baran's imprisonment were for Zilan and the children like a long, uniform road. Every day the same uncertainty, the same silence, the same longing. But in the world of children, time flowed differently. Nûdem grew older. Rêber began to speak more. And Baran witnessed this growth only through letters.

The letters from the prison gathered in a drawer in the house. Each letter was a piece of Baran's breath. Every line showed that he was still there, still thinking, still loving.

One evening, after the children had fallen asleep, Zilan sat at the table. On it lay a notebook. Nûdem's notebook.

On the cover, a small flower was drawn — by Nûdem herself. Zilan opened it. Inside lay a letter.

Nûdem's first letter to her father.

She remembered the day she had written it. At school, the teacher had given an assignment: **“Write a letter to someone you love.”**

The other children wrote to their mothers, friends, teachers. But when Nûdem picked up her pen, she wrote without hesitation the first name:

**“Papa.”**

As she wrote the word, her heart beat faster. For a moment she felt as if her father were standing beside her.

She paused often. Because she didn't know how to write something like this. A child's heart is full of feelings, but the words are small.

Finally she began:

**“Papa, I miss you very much. I go to school. My teacher likes me. I have friends, but without you nothing feels right.”**

As she wrote these lines, her eyes filled with tears. But she did not cry. She wanted to send the letter — and tears should not blur the paper.

She continued:

**“Papa, I am growing. I can read better now. The teacher says ‘well done.’ You would be happy if you could see it.”**

Then she paused. Put the pen down. Thought.

**“Papa, I want to become a teacher. Like you.”**

As she wrote that sentence, she smiled. For her, Baran's profession was something heroic. She remembered the stories he told his students. The little notes in his notebook. The evenings when he taught her to read.

At the end she drew a small picture: a house, a door, a girl standing in front of it holding a notebook.

Underneath she wrote:

**“Papa, I am waiting for you.”**

When Zilan read the letter, tears ran down her cheeks. But she did not put it away. She read every line again and again — as if trying to understand how a child's heart carries the absence of a father.

In that moment, Nûdem came out of her room. She saw the letter in her mother's hands.

**“Mama... did you read it?”**

Zilan lifted her head. **“Yes, my love. It is beautiful.”**

Nûdem sat down. **“Will Papa be happy when he reads it?”**

Zilan smiled. **“Very happy.”**

Nûdem lowered her gaze. **“I want to make Papa happy.”**

That sentence struck Zilan deeply. Because a child who wants to make her father happy is a child who cannot accept his absence.

Zilan took her hand. **“Papa loves you very much,”** she said. **“This letter will make his heart stronger.”**

Nûdem smiled. But sadness still lingered in her eyes.

The next day, Zilan placed the letter in an envelope. She took the bus to the prison. The journey was long and quiet. At the gate she handed the envelope to the officer.

**“It will be delivered to the inmate.”**

Zilan nodded. But her heart remained heavy. Because she did not know when Baran would receive the letter.

When Baran received it, he was sitting in his cell. The officer handed him the envelope. Baran's heart beat faster when he read the name:

**“Nûdem Rojhilat.”**

His hands trembled as he opened it. He read the letter. Every line brightened the darkness inside him a little more.

**“Papa, I miss you very much.”**

Baran's eyes filled. But he did not put the letter down.

**“Papa, I want to become a teacher. Like you.”**

When he read that sentence, something inside him loosened. The walls of the cell seemed wider, the ceiling higher, the door less heavy.

At the end he saw the small drawing: a house, a door, a girl.

Baran traced it with his fingers — as if he were touching his daughter's face.

Then he read the last sentence:

**“Papa, I am waiting for you.”**

Baran pressed the letter to his chest. Tears ran down his face. But this time he did not feel ashamed.

Because this letter was a letter that made a father's heart beat again.

Before he fell asleep, he read the letter once more. Then he whispered:

**“Nûdem... I am waiting for you too.”**

The cell was silent. But inside Baran, for the first time, it was a little brighter.

## **12 – Rêber's Dream**

In the months after Baran's imprisonment, the silence in the house had grown even deeper. Zilan worked, Nûdem grew older at school, and Rêber tried, in his childlike way, to understand why his father was not there. But the world of a six-year-old consists less of words and more of feelings. And Rêber's feelings revealed themselves most often at night.

One evening, after Zilan had put the children to bed, she sat in the kitchen thinking. She had cleaned all day, then cooked, then helped the children with their homework. The tiredness lay heavy in her bones. But when night came and the house grew quiet, the weight inside her grew even more.

Then she heard a soft sound from Rêber's room. A faint murmur, like the sound of a child speaking in sleep. Zilan stood up and carefully opened the door.

Rêber was tossing in his bed. His truck lay in his arms as always — the wheel taped on, the loading bed crooked, yet his small hands held the toy tightly as if it were a treasure.

Zilan sat down on the edge of the bed. She looked at her son's face. His brow was furrowed, as if he were recoiling from something.

**“Rêber?”** she whispered. But he did not wake.

Suddenly his lips moved. He spoke in his sleep.

**“Papa... come...”**

Zilan felt her heart tighten. That word was the pure sound of a child's longing.

**“Papa... come now...”**

His voice trembled. As if he were calling his father, as if Baran were about to walk through the door.

Zilan's eyes filled with tears. But she did not wake him. She simply sat and watched his small hand clutch the truck.

That night, Rêber's dream was as vivid as reality.

In his dream, the prison gate opened. His father stepped out. Baran smiled; his eyes shone. He wore his old jacket, his hair moved gently in the wind.

Rêber ran toward him. His small legs were fast. He held the truck tightly — the wheel still taped on.

**“Papa!”** he cried in the dream. **“Papa, you're here!”**

Baran knelt down and opened his arms. Rêber threw himself around his neck. Baran stroked his hair and said:

**“I’m here. I’m here now.”**

Rêber held out the truck. **“Papa, fix it.”**

Baran took the toy, repaired the wheel, removed the tape, made the truck whole again. Then he handed it back.

**“Look,”** he said in the dream. **“Now it’s whole again.”**

Rêber laughed. A laugh only children have — pure, bright, weightless.

But suddenly the dream changed. Baran’s face grew paler. The prison gate closed again. Baran was pulled back.

**“Papa?”** said Rêber. **“Papa, don’t go!”**

The door slammed shut. Baran’s face disappeared into the darkness.

Rêber screamed in the dream: **“Papa! Papa, come back!”**

And the dream went black.

As Zilan sat at the bedside, she saw the despair on Rêber’s face. Tears ran down his cheeks, yet he remained asleep. A child who cries in a dream carries feelings it cannot carry while awake.

Zilan stroked his hair. **“I’m here,”** she whispered. **“Mama is here.”**

But she knew: he was not looking for her. He was looking for his father.

After a while, his breathing calmed. His face relaxed. He held the truck even tighter — as if he would lose it if he let go.

Zilan stayed with him. Every word he spoke to his father in the dream cut into her heart.

In the morning, Rêber opened his eyes. Zilan was still sitting at the bedside.

**“Mama?”** he asked. **“Are you here?”**

Zilan smiled. **“I’m here, my love.”**

Rêber pointed at the truck. **“Papa will fix it.”**

Zilan nodded. **“Yes. When Papa comes, he’ll look at it.”**

But the sentence fell again into the emptiness of the house.

Rêber looked at her for a moment. Then he whispered:

**“Mama... why isn’t Papa coming?”**

Zilan took a deep breath. She had heard this question countless times. But each time it hurt the same.

**“Papa loves you very much,”** she said. **“He wants to come. But he can’t.”**

Rêber lowered his head. He held the truck in his arms. **“I’m waiting for him.”**

That sentence broke something inside Zilan.

Later at school, the teacher noticed that Rêber was withdrawn. While the other children played, he sat in a corner staring at his truck. The teacher knelt beside him.

**“Rêber, why aren’t you playing?”**

He lifted his head. **“Papa didn’t come.”**

The teacher paused. **“Do you miss him?”**

Rêber nodded. **“I saw him in my dream. He came. But then he left again.”**

The teacher looked at his face — a face carrying a longing far too big for a child.

**“Your Papa loves you,”** she said. **“He will come back one day.”**

Rêber smiled. But it was a smile carrying both hope and sadness.

That evening, when Zilan put the children to bed, Rêber held the truck again. He lay down, closed his eyes.

**“Papa,”** he whispered. **“Come.”**

Zilan stood in the doorway and heard it. Her eyes filled. But she did not cry. She had to remain strong.

That night, Rêber’s dream began again. And Baran walked through the door once more.

But in reality, that door remained closed.

## 13 – Baran's Defense

The longer the days in prison grew, the more the heaviness inside Baran transformed into something else: a quiet determination. The shock of the first weeks, the uncertainty, the pain — all of it gave way to deeper reflection. The walls of his cell became, in a way, a desk. Baran decided to write a defense.

This defense would never be read in court. The judge had already made his decision. The prosecutor had already spoken his accusations. But Baran wanted to write anyway. Because writing was his way of breathing.

One evening he sat at the small table in his cell. He opened the thin notebook the officer had given him. He took the pen in his hand. For a while he stared at the blank page.

Then he began.

**“I am a teacher.”**

He paused. For him, being a teacher was more than a profession. It was an identity. A stance. A way of life.

**“My weapon is the pen.”**

That sentence carried his entire truth. He had never spoken with violence, never with hatred, never with anger. In his classroom he had always taught the same principle:

**“Thinking is not a crime.”**

**“I have divided no one.”**

As he wrote this, he saw the courtroom before him: the judge's expressionless face, the prosecutor's hard gaze, Zilan collapsing, the children's screams... everything returned.

**“I wrote only one sentence.”**

That sentence was the core of his defense. A sentence that was not a crime — but a prayer from the heart of a human being.

**“Every people should be free to express their identity.”**

Baran wrote the sentence again. This time larger. As if he could break through the walls of the cell.

Again and again he paused. Thought. Breathed deeply. Closed his eyes.

Zilan's face appeared before him. That face had carried the same patience for years. He wrote for her as well.

He thought of Nûdem's letter. **“Papa, I want to become a teacher. Like you.”** That sentence had brightened the darkness inside him.

He thought of Rêber's dream. **“Papa... come.”** That a child called for his father even in sleep had torn Baran's heart apart.

He picked up the pen again.

**“I am a father.”**

That sentence was the heaviest part of his defense. The absence of a father is the deepest wound in a child's heart.

**“I lived to protect my children. To teach them the truth. To leave them a world in which they do not have to hide who they are.”**

As he wrote, tears ran down his cheeks. But he did not stop.

**“I am not a criminal.”**

That sentence carried his entire truth.

At the end of the defense, Baran paused. He put the pen down. Breathed deeply.

Then he wrote the final sentence:

**“I wrote only one sentence. And that sentence is not my crime — it is my humanity.”**

Baran closed the notebook. Placed his hands on it. Sat still for a while.

The cell was quiet. But inside him, for the first time, it felt a little lighter.

Because this defense was not written for the court — but for himself. For his identity, his past, his children, his humanity.

Before he fell asleep, he opened the notebook again. He read the final sentence.

**“I wrote only one sentence.”** Then he whispered:

**“And that sentence... is what makes me who I am.”**

## 14 – The Last Visit

As the days in prison flowed by in monotonous sameness, the visiting days were the hardest for Baran. Once a week he was allowed to see his family for a few minutes — a moment that was both hope and pain. When that day came, the cell door opened. The officer said only: **“Visit.”**

Baran stood up. He washed his hands, smoothed his hair. Making himself presentable in prison was a form of resistance. He did not want to appear tired to his children, but strong.

As he walked down the corridor, his heart beat faster. Each step brought him closer to his family. Yet he also knew that at the end of the visit the door would close again — and that thought burned inside him.

The visiting room was large. In the middle ran a long pane of glass. On both sides hung telephones. Prisoners on one side, families on the other.

When Baran entered the room, his eyes searched the crowd immediately. For a moment he did not see them — panic rose in him. Then he recognized them in the corner behind the glass.

Zilan. Nûdem. Rêber.

Baran’s breath caught. His heart pounded. The officer pointed him to a place at the glass. Baran sat down.

Zilan stepped closer. Her face was pale, but in her eyes there was a light — a light that broke through the darkness inside Baran for a moment.

Nûdem placed her hand against the glass. Her eyes were wet, but she did not cry. She wanted to be strong in front of her father.

Rêber held his truck in his arms. The wheel was still taped on. He lifted the toy to show it to his father.

Baran picked up the phone. Zilan lifted hers.

**“Zilan...”** Baran said. His voice trembled. **“Are you alright?”**

Zilan nodded. **“We’re holding on.”** But even behind the glass, the word sounded tired.

Nûdem took the receiver. **“Papa,”** she said softly but firmly. **“I work hard at school.”**

Baran smiled. **“I know, my love. I received your letter. It was beautiful.”**

Nûdem’s eyes lit up. **“I will become a teacher. Like you.”**

Baran’s eyes filled. But he did not cry. He wanted to remain strong.

**“You already are a teacher,”** he said. **“Your heart is one.”**

Nûdem smiled. But sadness lingered in the smile.

Now Rêber took the receiver. **“Papa,”** he said, lifting the truck to the glass. **“Look. I fixed it.”**

Baran looked at the toy. The wheel was crooked, the loading bed warped. But in Rêber's eyes there was hope.

**"It's beautiful,"** Baran said. **"You repaired it yourself."**

Rêber nodded. **"When you come, you'll make it better."**

That sentence struck Baran like a blade. But he did not show it.

**"Yes,"** he said. **"When I come, we'll fix it together."**

Rêber smiled — a smile full of pure, childlike love.

Zilan took the receiver again. **"Baran,"** she said quietly. **"The children miss you very much."**

Baran closed his eyes. **"I miss you too."**

Zilan was silent for a moment. Then she whispered: **"Hold on. We are here."**

That sentence lifted the weight from Baran's shoulders for a moment.

The visiting time neared its end. The officer walked through the room, giving signals.

Baran's heart beat faster. Because this moment was the most painful.

Nûdem kissed the glass. It was cold, but her breath left a warm imprint.

**“Papa,”** she said. **“Don’t go.”**

Baran’s eyes filled. But he did not cry. He placed his hand against the glass. On the other side, Nûdem’s hand lay in the same place. They did not touch — but they rested on the same spot.

Rêber waved. **“Papa, come.”**

Baran’s heart broke. But he smiled. **“I will come,”** he said. **“One day.”**

Zilan set the receiver down. Her eyes were wet, but she did not cry. She had to remain strong.

**“Baran,”** she said. **“We are waiting for you.”**

Baran nodded. **“I am waiting for you too.”**

The officer placed a hand on his shoulder. **“Time’s up.”**

Baran stood. He looked at his family one last time.

Nûdem’s trembling eyes. Rêber’s small hands clutching the truck. Zilan’s face trying to stay strong.

Baran felt something inside him empty out.

**“I love you,”** he said. But behind the glass it was only a faint breath.

The officer led him to the door. As he walked, he heard the voices of his children:

**“Papa!” “Papa, don’t go!” “Papa!”**

The door closed. The voices fell silent.

On the way back to his cell, Baran whispered:

**“I wrote only one sentence.”**

But that sentence had placed a pane of glass between him and his family.

## **EPILOG – “A World Made from a Sentence”**

Five years in a person’s life are at once very long and frighteningly short. Behind the prison walls, five years were for Baran a heavy silence, an unbroken longing, an endless wait. But outside, time flowed differently. For Zilan, five years meant raising two children alone. For Nûdem, five years meant stepping from childhood into youth. For Rêber, five years meant learning what it means to grow up without a father.

And one day, the prison gate opened.

An officer called Baran’s name. **“Rojhilat, release.”**

Baran stood up. He owned almost nothing — only the notebook containing his defense and the letters from his children. As he walked toward the gate, his heart beat faster. For five years he had heard only the sound of this door closing. Now, for the first time, he heard it open.

The gate swung outward. Sunlight fell onto his face. The air of Amed felt warm after the cold prison walls.

Baran stepped outside.

No one stood at the gate. The officer said: **“Your family will be here soon.”**

Baran nodded. But something tightened inside him. For five years he had imagined this moment. And now that it had arrived, he did not know how to hold it.

After a while, a car appeared in the distance. As it came closer, Baran’s breath quickened. The door opened.

Zilan stepped out.

Her face had changed. Five years had carved fine lines into it; the skin beneath her eyes had sunk slightly. But in her eyes burned the same light as before. When Baran saw that light, warmth spread through him.

Zilan walked toward him. Baran walked toward her. They met in the middle.

The weight of five years dissolved in that embrace. Zilan cried. Baran’s hands trembled. But neither spoke. Because in some moments, words are unnecessary.

The other car door opened. Nûdem stepped out.

She was no longer a little girl. Twelve years old now, with longer hair and a face that had grown more serious. But her eyes were the same — the eyes that had pressed against the glass on the first visiting day.

Nûdem walked toward her father. Baran knelt down. She threw her arms around his neck.

**“Papa,”** she said, her voice trembling. **“You came.”**

Baran stroked her hair. **“I’m here,”** he said. **“I’m here now.”**

Nûdem cried — but this time, they were tears of joy.

Then Rêber stepped out.

He was nine now. Taller, his face changed. But in his hand he still held the same thing:

The wooden truck.

The wheel was taped on, the loading bed crooked, the paint faded — but Rêber still carried it.

Baran looked at his son. Rêber stopped. Then he walked slowly toward him and held out the truck.

**“Papa,”** he said. **“Can you fix it?”**

Baran took the truck. The weight of the toy felt like the weight of the five years. He touched the wheel, removed the tape, set the piece back in place, straightened the truck.

Then he handed it back.

**“Look,”** he said. **“Now it’s whole again.”**

Rêber smiled — a smile that had waited five years inside a child’s heart.

When Baran entered the house, everything was at once familiar and foreign. The walls were the same, but the children had grown. The kitchen was the same, but Zilan's face had new lines. The hallway was the same, but the silence was different.

Baran walked through the house. Touched every corner. Stood in every room. As if searching for the life he had left behind five years earlier.

Zilan brought him tea. Baran took the cup. Warmth spread through his hands.

**“You’re home now,”** Zilan said.

Baran nodded. **“Yes,”** he said. **“Now I’m home.”**

That night, after the children had fallen asleep, Baran sat at the table. He thought of the sentence he had written five years earlier.

**“Every people should be free to express their identity.”**

That sentence had divided his life. But it had also carried him — in the prison, in the cell, in the courtroom, in the prosecutor's office, before the judge. That sentence had preserved his humanity.

Baran picked up the pen. Opened a new page.

He wrote the final sentence:

**“Some sentences do not make one guilty; some sentences make one human.”**

He set the pen down. Closed the notebook.

Zilan stood in the doorway. She did not ask, **“What did you write?”** Because she did not need to know.

Baran lifted his head and smiled.

**“A world made from a sentence,”** he said. **“And that world belongs to us now.”**

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